K. M. SHEA
The Unicorn Procession

THE UNICORN PROCESSION

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THE UNICORN PROCESSION

The procession was a loud affair filled with flapping, scarlet colored flags, trumpeting horns, neighing horses, and baying of the hounds.

Dozens of armor covered soldiers, bearing swords and pikes, marched in unison. Their captain rode near them on a proud horse.

In the middle of this sea of sounds was a young lady with china blue eyes and blonde hair the color of mustard. She sat on the back of a delicate, grey mare, decked in the finest trappings available. Her gown was made of sky blue silk, and intricate designs were sewn into the sweeping sleeves. Lace lined her skirts and neckline. As this fair lady rode she sang, slightly off key, to the beat of the drums played by the boys in the front of the procession.

The scarlet flags proudly poked through the forest sky, occasionally unfurling to reveal the image of a white unicorn. And so, the dogs howled, the horses neighed, the drums and trumpets played, the lady sang, the soldiers marched and talked, and the entire situation was generally deafening.

“ISN’T THIS A LITTLE LOUD TO TRY AND FIND A UNICORN?” El, the maid, asked herself, speaking louder so she could hear her own voice over the fanfare as she hurried after her lady’s horse.

“SHHHHHHHHHH,” the soldiers hushed her as a hound woefully bayed.

El gave them a withering glare and darted around a pot hole.

“Please do be quiet, El,” the lady on the horse, Lady Hannelore, scoffed. “What do *you* know about catching unicorns? Nothing!” Lady Hannelore answered for her.

“Yes, but even the stupidest page boy knows that to catch a mere bird it’s best to be quiet,” El replied.

“What?” Lady Hannelore shouted, deafened by the rest of the procession.

“I said even the stupidest—,”

“What?”

“I SAID EVEN THE STUPIDEST—,”

“Do be QUIET, El! We’re hunting a unicorn!” Lady Hannelore ordered.

El wondered why she had bothered to come.

“My lady,” said the heavily mustached captain, drawing his bay horse next to Hannelore’s. “We have found a suitable meadow, and a unicorn appears to be at the far end.”

“It must be deaf,” El muttered.

“Then let us stop,” Lady Hannelore decided.

“HALT THE PROCESSION!”

“**HALT THE PROGRESSION**!”

“SMALT THE REGRESSION!”

“*EXALT THE RECESSION*!”

After several more choruses of shouts the unicorn procession finally ground to a halt.

“El, help me dismount,” Hannelore called, flapping her white gloved hands.

“Yes, my lady,” El said, walking up to the mare.

“Oh, think of all the things we’ll get when the soldiers kill the unicorn!” Hannelore squealed.

“Yes, my lady. Unicorn hair for healing soup, its horn for checking poison, its hooves for holy talismans and unicorn milk for curing ugliness,” El agreed, although she was sad that they would have to kill such a beautiful beast.

“What?” Lady Hannelore squawked, almost falling off her patient mare. “Who *cares* about those things? I’m going to instruct my tailor to use its mane and tail as thread for my next dress!” Hannelore decided.

El was very tempted to ‘accidentally’ trip Lady Hannelore.

“This way, my lady,” the mustached captain said.

“Right,” Hannelore agreed. “Come along, El!” she called before sweeping off through the forest, the captain leading the way.

“We thank you for your help, Lady Hannelore. Surely the unicorn will be instantly tamed at the sight of you,” the captain said as they broke into the meadow.

“I can’t imagine why,” El grumbled.

Hannelore glowed, probably more at the thought that her unicorn thread was soon within reach than the fact that she was ‘pure’ enough to attract a unicorn.

The unicorn stood at the far end of the meadow, his velvet muzzle sniffing the ground before he selected a delectable patch of clover to nibble on. His fur was a luxurious white that glowed in the sunlight and nearly blinded El and the procession. His mane was long, thick, and crimpy like silk threads. His pearl white horn glistened and shone as sunlight struck it.

“Right. I’ll go tame him,” Hannelore decided, the first to step into the meadow. She lifted up the skirts of her dress and marched forward, not at all daunted and certain that the mystical and deadly beast would not harm her.

“I’m not convinced you can,” El said, trailing after her mistress. “After all isn’t it supposed to be a virgin?”

“Quiet you fool!” Hannelore hissed, swinging around.

Soldiers slowly lined the shadowy edge of the meadow, swords ready in case the beast proved to be dangerous. (Secretly they swapped whispers. “Was the chambermaid right?” Furthermore, “Was the unicorn stupid enough to be deceived?”)

As Hannelore walked further into the meadow the unicorn looked up, his black eyes staring at Hannelore as he chewed his mouthful of clover, unimpressed with the noble girl.

“Right, unicorn. Come here so we can kill you,” Hannelore said, dropping her skirts and patting her legs.

The unicorn blinked.

“That worked so well,” El said, picking at her nails.

Hannelore huffed. “Ugh, you stupid, ghastly creature, come here!” she growled, nearly tripping on a bush.

The unicorn watched her approach him and lowered his head.

“That’s right. Be a good boy. Captain you can kill him at any —AHHHH!” Hannelore screamed as the unicorn tucked in his head before ripping it up, bashing her in the face.

(“Nope” the soldiers agreed. “Not stupid enough.”)

“And thus we learn the advantages of not lying,” El shrugged.

Hannelore shrieked and fell backward. “I THINK HE BROKE MY NOSE!” she screamed, holding her face in her white gloved hands.

The men stirred and uneasily called to each other, but no one moved to assist Lady Hannelore.

El sighed and mumbled something very unlady - like under her breath before detaching herself from the edge of the woods. She stalked across the meadow motioning to the unicorn with her hands. “Go on, shoo! You’ve been bad,” El said before crouching down next to Hannelore. “Are you well, my lady?”

“Of course NOT! That beast just broke my beautiful nose!” Hannelore shrieked, nearly nailing El with a flailing arm.

El leaned back and fell on her bum, scratching her hand on a prickly weed. “Stupid procession,” El grumbled, glaring at the prickles in her hand, a tiny drop of blood squeezing out of the cut.

There was a rustle behind her, and suddenly an equine head lowered over El’s shoulder. Soft black lips tickled El’s bare palm, and her wound instantly closed.

“He has been tamed by my astounding beauty!” Hannelore announced, struggling to stand while pinching the bridge of her nose, tipping her head back. “El, you may go now. You’re not pretty at all. You might frighten him.”

El stared into the liquid black eyes of the unicorn and carefully curled her fingertips around the black muzzle pressed into her hand before she rose, brushing off her ratty dress.

“Run away while you can,” she whispered before she turned around and briskly walked to the edge of the forest. Healing powers or not, it was horrible that they were going to kill such a creature.

The soldiers cried out and shrank back in fear, causing El to stop and frown.

“Be careful, El. The unicorn must think you’re threatening me so he’s going to stab you,” Hannelore said, an ugly bruise starting to form on her face.

El turned around, her thoughtful frown still in place, and came face to face with the gigantic, horned equine.

“Get out of the meadow, girl,” hissed the mustached captain as he slowly crept forward. “Leave Lady Hannelore to her work,” he said as El slowly ran a hand over the unicorn’s silken, muscled neck.

El yipped as the captain grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her, wrenching El away.

“Yes, you foolish, little maid,” Hannelore added, throwing one of her satin white gloves, that was now grass stained, at her maid.

“Let me go!” El said as the captain dragged her away.

“Foolish servant. I knew we shouldn’t have brought her along,” the captain muttered before there was a whoosh of air and he was suddenly flying forward while gold hooves danced into view.

El’s eyes grew large at the sight of the unicorn’s powerful hindquarters directly next to her.

The unicorn snorted and turned around, pawing the ground before tossing his head.

“Oh no, he’s angered by the ugliness of the maid!” cried a soldier.

“Excuse me?” El protested.

The unicorn snorted again and charged the nearest man.

“Run away!” a soldier shouted before pandemonium broke out.

Soldiers fled on foot while the captain hurriedly mounted his horse, nearly falling off the other side in his effort to leave the unicorn behind.

“Someone help me!” Hannelore screamed, still clutching her nose as she waddled to her frightened mare.

“Lady,” El said, stepping toward the end of the meadow while the unicorn reared and neatly smashed a soldier in the head.

“NO! You stay behind! Sacrifice yourself for the good of others. Don’t be selfish, El. This is all your fault anyway!”

“I beg your pardon?” El asked, going slack jawed. “Who was the one who wanted to pretend to be all sweet and virginal?”

The mustard haired lady threw herself on her mare, only managing to get half on before the mare took off, racing through the trees. “Don’t you dare follow me! AHHH,” she screamed, disappearing from view.

So the drummer boys played a much faster beat, and the horn players concentrated on leaving the forest as fast as they could, their golden horns gleaming as they ran among the frightened dogs, which chased after the screaming soldiers. (Most of them had dropped their weapons when the unicorn delivered the swift kick to their captain.)

“Um….?” El trailed off as the Unicorn Procession disappeared through the trees, moving much faster than they ever had before.

El turned to look at the unicorn who was swatting flies with his silken tail. “Well gee, thanks,” she said.

The unicorn shook his head to rid himself of some more flies.

“There goes *that* career choice,” El muttered, sitting down on the ground with a flop. “I guess I can’t be a lady’s maid after all. That’s another failed career. I can’t be a shoe designer, even though I *still* think glass shoes are a good idea, I can’t take care of rabbits, they always run away from me screaming that they’re late for a hot date, I can’t work as a housekeeper, those

stupid magical lamps always break whenever I'm around, so what *can* I do?" El wondered.

The unicorn sneezed before rearing back, holding the pose and looking very picturesque for several moments.

"Um, no can't be a painter either. I can only draw stick people," El snorted. Her eyes suddenly lit up. "I know, I'll join the circus!" she said, starting out through the forest.

The unicorn followed her.

"*You're* going to join the circus with me?" El asked, arching an eyebrow as the large horse slowly drew alongside her.

He wuffled in agreement.

"Then can I ride you?"

He snorted and shook his head, looking deeply offended and disgusted.

"It was worth a shot," El grumbled.

And so "The Unicorn Procession" circus was formed. It was a smashing hit and success. So much so that people from all over the land traveled to see it. But this is not the story of their circus, and all the delightful adventures they encountered. (Including but not limited to the sphinx that forgot its riddle, the genie in a chamber pot, the sleeping prince, and the nail file in the stone.) And so, dear readers, it is here where I must leave you.

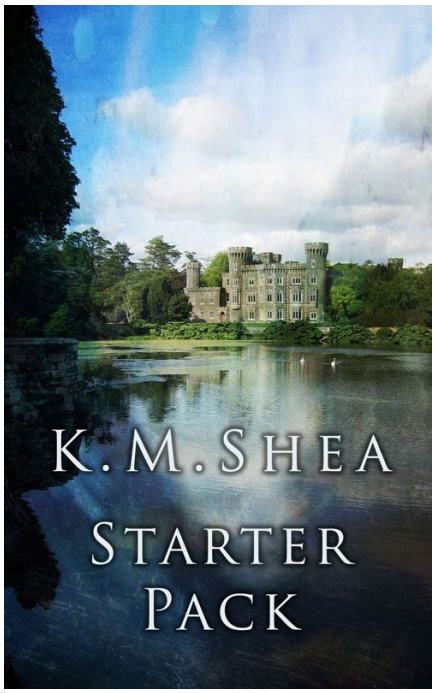
And yes, the unicorn really did break Hannelore's nose.

THE END

For more information on the author and free extras please visit:
kmshea.com

AFTERWORD

Thank you for reading *The Unicorn Procession*, I hope you enjoyed El's story! If you want to read more of my work, sign up for my newsletter to receive my **free** *K. M. Shea Starter Pack* ebook.



It contains:

- A *King Arthur and Her Knights* prequel short story
- A *Red Rope of Fate* prequel short story
- An original fairy tale, *Princess Snow and Queen Ruby*

My newsletter is released every month, and contains information about contests, new freebies—like short stories and

extra scenes—free books, and reader opinion polls.

Thank you for your support and encouragement. I am proud to say I have the best readers. Therefore, it is my dearest wish that El and her friends made you laugh and warmed your heart. Thank you.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

K. M. Shea is a fantasy-romance author who never quite grew out of adventure books or fairy tales, and still searches closets in hopes of stumbling into Narnia. She is addicted to sweet romances, witty characters, and happy endings. She also writes LitRPG and GameLit under the pen name, A. M. Sohma.

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